

Alex White
2444 Milton Street
Newton, NC 28658

Dear Walter Payton,

It is a rare occurrence when a book can change a person's life. I am proud to say that your autobiography, Never Die Easy, inspired me to achieve success not only on the football field, but in my personal life as well. My outlook on adversity has become one of pure determination and willpower. The story of your life has instilled many important lessons that have helped me overcome daunting problems.

I first read your story when I was in sixth grade. My parents gave it to me as a birthday present because they knew that you were my hero. I enjoyed your story, but the inner message never really hit home with me. I think I was a little too young and naïve to fully understand the struggle you went through. A few years passed, and by this time I was facing the challenges of middle school football. Throughout my childhood, I had always excelled in sports. I was very athletic, and usually overpowered my opponents. But my eighth grade year I just could not get it done. I was not sure what the problem was, but it bothered me for months to come. Disappointment plagued my mind, and I knew I had more to offer. Thinking back on it now, I was very intimidated and lacked confidence in my own abilities. My motor simply was not running at the speed I knew it could handle. I was lacking a serious work ethic, and I needed to play with heart, instead of over thinking every aspect of the game.

Needless to say, I was searching for an answer. I was about to start high school, and a new leaf was going to be turned. I had four years to get the job done, and I was going to make each and every day count. Your book provided me with the inspiration to face these daunting tasks. I was 14 years old then, and had matured to a high level. I knew your story would provide me with details on how you dealt with problems, but I never knew that it would change my life as drastically as it did. The determination and perseverance you showed when not getting drafted by a big time school was remarkable. The pressure you felt on filling Gale Sayers' shoes in Chicago was overwhelming, but you handled it all the same. I took these true accounts and used them as fuel for my inner fire. Throughout the off season I pushed myself harder than my teammates, challenging them to keep up. I really started noticing results as the season progressed. I was a new man, playing with a passion and intensity that instilled fear in my opponents. I would take on this hulk-like attitude that was created deep within me, releasing it on the field. Defense became my domain, and making tackles became my game. I had discovered what playing with heart really meant, and how a motor was supposed to run. Your book engraved in my mind that anything worth doing, is worth doing with all the energy and passion you have. I was leaving everything out on that field, which is something I had not done in a long time. I was no longer afraid of making mistakes, because I knew that I had poured every ounce of my soul into the game. And if lying on that field, defeated, was where I found myself, then I was fine with that, because I knew I had nothing left to give. I had found a sense of pride for the way I played the game, and football had become one of the most fun games of my life. Your story was the key to unlocking the door of success. My attitude in life had changed also. I was a more intense person who got fired up over challenges that I faced. I cannot tell you how much your life account changed my outlook and attitude. And those times when I was feeling down or out, disappointed with myself, all I had to do was remember your story. Knowing what you

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had fought through inspired me over and over again. Your story ignited a flame that kept my hungry heart playing with a passion that outmatched all others.

Finally, I would like to leave you with a few words of thanks. Thank you for writing this inspiring book. Thank you for telling of your struggle with cancer, and the bravery you showed in battling it for so long. You may not be on this Earth today, but know that your attitude and work ethic is alive within me. You were able to take a young boy who was struggling with the pains of growing up, and turn him into a fighter who leaves nothing back. Your words carried me from the ashes and into the satisfaction of knowing I had figured this complicated game out. Since reading your book, I was pulled up to varsity for my sophomore year. I had a great season and ended up starting at safety for the last six games because of my hard work. I want you to know that I have never felt closer to any stranger in my life. I feel like a little piece of you is thriving within me, pushing me to go the extra mile. Never Die Easy was a life changer, and you were the tracks that kept my train going.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alex White".

Alex White